

TO: All Area Chiefs

OC 56-603

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FROM: Chief, [REDACTED]

30 October 1956

SUBJECT: Preparation of Fitness Reports

1. Under date of 30 August I sent you reference, which I hoped would help in making fitness reports as realistic and meaningful as possible. The same material was furnished to all Division and Staff Chiefs here at Headquarters. Very soon the question was raised "If [REDACTED] takes the lead in this matter and makes fitness reports honest and realistic, will not the members of [REDACTED] suffer by comparison with other components of KUBARK?" My answer was: "Well, not necessarily. Promotions, rotations and assignments within [REDACTED] are well controlled and rarely will our people be placed in comparison with other components." This, of course, is not true when application for membership in the career staff is being considered by a Panel of Examiners or the KUBARK Selection Board. There may possibly be other instances which do not come to mind at the moment.

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2. I held a meeting today, attended by all Staff and Division Chiefs, some Deputies and the Chairman of our CSB to consider the problem. We had a frank discussion of this matter, and after discussing all the parts of the fitness report where ratings must be made, we came to the conclusion that there should be typed on Part I of the report under Section B 2, a statement substantially as follows: "This report has been prepared under the criteria established by Chief [REDACTED] in OC-56-505, dated 30 August 1956, to make fitness reports as realistic and meaningful as possible. As an example, therefore, a numerical rating of 3 in Section I, Part II should not be considered as indicative of inadequacy but more appropriately as average within the age, experience and grade of the individual rated."

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3. Fitness reports are of primary interest to two groups. Employees being rated or evaluated are rightly interested because of their natural desire to know where they stand with their supervisors. The second group is in the management field and this group requires as a tool of management, information on the performance and potential of each individual. Therefore, what is required in a fitness report is that the supervisor making the rating gives his honest opinion about the individual being rated. Important functions of a supervisor are making such honest opinions, accurately reporting them and communicating them to the individual. Attempts on the part of the supervisor to guess what

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standards others will use and to influence action by deliberately rating high can only result in the long run in increased errors in personnel management and a less efficient organization. Would our tasks not be easier and would not [REDACTED] be even more effective than it is if it were possible in every instance to have in each position the "best qualified" individual for that position? This, of course, is not completely possible, but honest and realistic fitness reports will tend to make that more nearly possible.

4. I think that we will get more realistic fitness reports if we depart from the injunction that "individuals will be rated by the immediate supervisor." In larger elements of [REDACTED] this gets pretty far down the line and the rater and reviewing official are too close to the individual rated to permit complete objectivity. It would be better if one supervisor rated all the personnel in an activity because then he would apply one set of standards to all individuals. Here at Headquarters, I have asked that no one below a Branch Chief rate and the Division Chief review.

5. After a discussion, longer than the above, but in general along the same line, we considered the fitness report itself. We started with Section C-1 "Job Performance Evaluation." The evaluation properly lies somewhere between 3 and 4, but there is too large a jump between 5 and 6. In my opinion, 5 should read "a fine performance; carries out most of his responsibilities exceptionally well." Some people have, and rightfully so in my opinion, inserted a rating of 5.5 or 5.8 for example. In this same Section there's a small place for comments. Here, where you can't honestly rate a man 6, but think he is better than 5, you can say just that. Incidentally, in all ratings it must be considered that no one is perfect and you strengthen the evaluation of above average and outstanding ratings by rating some people, and perhaps most people, in some respect somewhat below the average.

6. About the same comments seem applicable to the ratings under Section C-2. Almost no one really merits a 6 or 7 rating here. It is much better to rate 4 or 5 and then under Item C-3 where you have an opportunity to discuss strengths and weaknesses, tell really what the man is capable of. On the subject of weaknesses, I do not rate a characteristic or an idiosyncrasy as a weakness unless it is so pronounced that it, (a) interferes with the performance of his job, or (b) interferes with others in the performance of their job, or (c) its so glaring as to require an inordinate amount of attention from the supervisor. We all have weaknesses but unless they fall in one of the above categories, they are probably not worth mentioning. I usually say "no significant weaknesses."

7. With respect to Section D, the above remarks I think are equally applicable.

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8. With respect to Part II, Section G, I recently rated a Division Chief who has twice been an Area Chief and who is one of our "stars." I gave him a numerical rating of 5. This means exactly what it says, that he "will probably adjust quickly to more responsible duties without further training." Here, I had in mind that the "more responsible duties" would be Deputy Chief, [REDACTED]. He no doubt will adjust quickly without further training other than on the job, but I couldn't rate him 6 or 7. On the other hand, in Section G-4, concerning his potential, I stated that he definitely is one of those who should be considered for a tour as Deputy Chief, [REDACTED]. Whatever we do in giving numerical ratings, we must not establish a comparison based solely on a numerical system. A balancing of the numerical rating with modifying comments in other parts of the form will prevent any injustice being done to our people when they are compared with others in other components. I didn't hesitate when applying descriptive rating numbers in Section G-2, to rate him 2; i.e., an average supervisor in the situation "when immediate subordinates include members of the opposite sex." He laughingly admitted, when I showed him this rating that he didn't merit a rating of 3 - "that he would be a strong supervisor in this situation." In Section G-4, you really have a good opportunity to help in the management of personnel by indicating what you think an individual's growth potential is in this organization. You can indicate how far you think the individual may go if he continues at the same rate of progress that he has demonstrated to you. There will be some individuals, and I am sure you know several, who have reached or will shortly reach their maximum potential. Others will spring up ahead of their contemporaries and be expected to excel them in the years to come.

9. With respect to Section H, you may have no plans for training or other developmental experience for this individual, however, you can indicate what training, etc., he should have or what assignment you think would broaden him.

10. In Section H-2 there should be put down things that the CSB should be aware of in dealing with rotation assignments. It is important to know whether or not the individual's family may limit his usability or affect his assignability.

11. Section I, description of the individual is quite important. This one we had considerable discussion about today and I will run over the categories briefly using the same numbers that are in this Section:

1. Able to see another's point of view - I think there are fewer to be rated above average in this category than the number to be rated below average. Most people are just about average when it comes to seeing another's viewpoint. The ones who are below average in this category are likely to be older ones, those more set in their ways and more obstinate.

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2. Can make decisions on his own when need arises - This is a very important category and we will find more departures from average in this category than in some of the others.

3. Has initiative - This, like category 2 will show more divergence.

4. Is analytic in his thinking. 19. Thinks clearly - These two are related, but of the two, I think 19 more important. A person who is above average in analytical thinking really must be one who puts down all the pros and cons and comes out after analysis with an objective answer.

5. Strives constantly for new knowledge and ideas - It seems to me that we have a sharp divergence here perhaps along the line that those who read only the comic sections are below average and those avid students who keep abreast of things are above average.

6. Knows when to seek assistance - This requires little discussion. Again there are those who don't.

7. Can get along with people - Most people get along with other people and they are just about average in this respect. Occasionally you will find one who stands out above his contemporaries and also there are some who are not really members of the team because they can't get along with their fellows.

8. Has memory for facts - This is an important attribute in certain jobs, but most people are about the same, i.e., average, and it is not derogatory if they are rated as average. A secretary or an administrative assistant is expected to have developed a good memory for facts. Also, I think an engineer and technicians have this more highly developed than the rest of us.

9. Gets things done - People fall pretty much into two categories here, average and below average. Occasionally you will find one who is above average, possibly even outstanding, but I think they would be a rarity.

10. Can cope with emergencies - Here there is a fairly sharp demarcation line between those who can deal with unusual and sudden situations and those who are completely helpless when confronted with something "not in the pattern." We discussed today, what is meant by emergencies. Of course, this varies widely. It is my belief that this is meant to deal with situations in which the individual has had no previous experience. For example, the Office of a Division Chief. I call him on the phone, neither he nor his Deputy are present, only a recent EOD. The one who answers the phone says they are neither here, but I think Mr. so and so can

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help you and proceeds to find Mr. so and so. He too is faced with something he hasn't encountered before, but he picks up the ball and starts action to satisfy my requirements. I would say that he could cope with an emergency. Of course, there will be other situations in which a radio operator at a one man station, or one man who is alone on shift, but handles the situation as best he can and stays with it until he has gotten results. He can cope with an emergency. You all know other examples.

11. Has high standards of accomplishment - We demand of all our people high standards of accomplishment and you all well know those who do not have such standards. This is an important category and I agree that there are a number of people who are above average.

12. Shows originality - This is one of the categories, if possessed by an individual, tends to raise him well above mediocrity.

13. Accepts responsibilities - This is an important category, and we expect most people to show an increasing ability to accept responsibility as they grow in stature and have more experience.

14. Admits his errors - I think most of us are about average in this respect. I know I am. It is hard to picture and individual who is above average or outstanding in this respect, but it is easy to pick out those who are obstinate and categorically refuse to admit errors even when proven to be wrong.

15. Responds well to supervision - It is also the exception to find an individual who doesn't respond to supervision, but we should definitely rate those few below average.

16. Does his job without strong support - I think most people are average, and a few definitely below average, and these should be so rated.

17. Comes up with solutions to problems - I really don't know what it means and have no comment.

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19. See No. 4.

20. Completes assignments within allowable time limits - It is only the laggard that should be pointed out here although you will occasionally find an individual who invariably completes his assignments fully and accurately within the allotted time and even ahead of time. He should be marked above average.

21. Is effective in discussions with associates - I think the majority of people are average, altho there are some who are almost completely ineffective in discussion with associates and a few others you are always content to have represent you on important matters.

22. Implements decisions regardless of own feelings - This is most important because you can't have a good team if a subordinate does not act wholeheartedly as if your decision was his. I would not consider a rating of 3, in this as in many other categories, as an indication of deficiencies. However, there are some who do this more naturally and more willing than others and contribute greatly to team work. These should be marked above average and in some cases, perhaps outstanding.

23. Is thoughtful of others - I don't think its difficult to rate individuals objectively in this category.

24. Works well under pressure - Here we have marked differences in people as to how they work under pressure.

25. Displays judgment - This is a difficult one because it is often your judgment vs his judgment, but over a considerable period, an after the fact review will show whether an individual consistently shows good judgment or not. Often a clue can be found in the way he manages his personal life.

26. Is security conscious - In my opinion, this should be: "is he or ain't he?" I maintain that members of [REDACTED] who are concerned with this category are no better than average because it is their job to be security conscious. I think everyone is average except the individual who repeatedly has security violations.

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27. Is versatile - An individual who is a good operator, a good technician, and a good supervisor is certainly more versatile than the average when compared to a contemporary who may be only a fair technician, but a good operator and not much of a supervisor.

28. His criticism is constructive - It is easy to pick out the people who have something to offer in their criticism as opposed to those who complain, but have nothing constructive to offer.

29. Facilitates smooth operation of his office - offers a wider range of rating than some of the others. Some people are exceptional "members of the team" and should be given credit accordingly.

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30. Does not require strong and continuous supervision - This may be said of almost all our people, and the ones who do require strong and continued supervision are no doubt below average in many other characteristics.

12. I don't know whether this discourse is of any value to you, but it was worthwhile in our discussion today. I hope, if you have any questions, you will direct them to me either by dispatch or thru the occasional visitors from Headquarters with whom you have an opportunity to discuss this matter.

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